



**From:** Dr. Ron Poropatich, MD (Colonel, US Army, retired)  
**To:** Blue Star Members  
**Subject:** A Potential Checklist for Senior Care

A couple of years ago I was the caretaker for my two elderly parents. Based on that experience, and my years as a doctor, I have created a list of things to think about in senior care. Below is a comprehensive checklist of everything a 55-year-old should be thinking about as they help their aged parent age in place.

### Section 1: Physical accommodations to the home:

	Home security system notification roster for families in place and family names/numbers available to security firm?
	Spare keys to house with neighbors who can respond quickly to emergencies at all hours of day?
	Night lights in place to avoid falls at night when going to bathroom?
	No throw rugs in travelled walkways that might lead to a fall.
	No extension cords in walkway spaces.
	Avoid overloading of power outlets with excessive plugs
	Ensure smoke detectors are in place and batteries changed regularly – when clocks are switched to daylight savings time
	If possible, install handrails in shower and along toilet
	Elevate toilet seat to ensure easier ability to rise from seated position.
	Have multiple portable phones accessible in highly utilized rooms of house
	If stair lifts are in place, ensure a back-up plan is in place for elderly during power outages to get them to main living area and evacuated during an emergency – no heat or AC, or fire in house
	Ensure easy transition of elderly into and out of shower
	Remember to discard spoiled food from frig during power outages
	Ensure there is a clear plan in place to get elderly out of their house or into their car from garage – during both routine as well as emergency situations
	Have light timers installed in rooms frequently used by elderly
	Know who to call in advance to fix AC/Furnace when system fails

### Section II: Legal Paperwork

	Ensure power of attorney and living will is in place and copies made available to all family members
	Home deed, living trust, copies of financial holdings needs to be stored in an accessible location for family member identified as Executor to estate

	Ensure elderly member will includes listing of executor and a back up executor in the event primary executor is unavailable or unwilling to serve in this capacity
	Burial planning – ensure family members know where to take the body of the deceased (funeral home) and how the elderly wishes to be buried – cremation vs. burial?
	Consider preparing obituary of family member in advance, before they expire – this will soften the load when other burial decisions are being made by them (i.e. what clothes to bury Dad in).

### Section III: Chronic Disease Management

	Ensure elderly member medical problem list, drug allergies and current medications is written down and distributed to the elderly member, family members, and if necessary, neighbors
	Ensure copies of recent lab tests (CBC, chemistries) and EKG is available to local family members who would respond to a medical emergency (helpful to identify changes in clinical status)
	Ensure family members know the name and contact information for elderly member’s primary care provider
	Consider hiring visiting nurse for elderly member with limited mobility or close proximity to support help – neighbors
	Ensure there is a back-up “emergency” oxygen cylinder for those on home oxygen – important for oxygen concentrators that fail during power outages.
	Ensure someone preloads daily medications into pill vials that elderly can either take themselves or can be given by hired help
	Ensure there is adequate background checks and references checked on hired help for elderly
	Take photos/movies of elderly members personal valuables in their home that can be viewed later in the event home health care workers get accused of theft – elderly get easily paranoid and need assurance that new hired help is not stealing from them
	Ensure someone is responsible for cleaning the home and buying groceries and preparing meals, if needed
	Ensure elderly gets regular eye and mental status exams – i.e. yearly, if they are still driving
	Ensure elderly gets an annual flu shot and a pneumococcal vaccine every 5 years
	Ensure elderly gets checked regularly for vitamin D deficiency
	Ensure elderly gets regular thyroid lab tests
	Ensure elderly gets toenails cut regularly and has a foot exam checked regularly, if diabetic
	Conduct skin exam daily for those confined to bed or wheelchair to ensure there are no pressure ulcers
	Keep cigarettes and alcohol away from elderly or home health nurses (will share with elderly) if there is concern for abuse, by either party
	Ensure elderly member and family know the signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia
	Ensure elderly knows how to self-administer nitroglycerin and make sure it is close during onset of chest pain symptoms – same for hired home nurse and family members who

	frequently visit
	Ensure elderly takes a bath at least once a week.
	Check for skin breakdown for elderly who use disposable underwear – especially important for those not frequently changed
	Ensure bed has disposable “chucks” in place to handle incontinence (fecal and urine) occurrences
	Ensure elderly member gets weighed regularly and keep data along with old lab results and old EKG
	Ensure someone is keeping count of available medications to make sure there is no lapse in administration
	Ensure there is an understanding of elderly member’s needs if overnight/extended travel is being planned – i.e. ensuring oxygen is available on long plane flights, enough meds,

#### **Section IV: In-Home Technologies**

	Smoke detectors in basement, bedroom and kitchen – minimum and with battery back up during power outages
	Carbon monoxide detector in place
	Surge protectors in place for appliances with computer circuit boards (frig/dryer/washer, etc)
	Have a Personal Emergency Response System (PERS), or medical alert device, in place
	Consider in-home monitoring equipment based on whatever chronic disease you face

#### **Section V: Financial**

	Ensure checking accounts are listed in joint accounts for children truly committed to parents welfare
	Inventory of all financial assets (stocks, bonds, checking accounts) needs to be in accessible location for identified Executor
	Avoid access to credit cards if elderly member is unable to control their spending – curse of QVC!
	Check with VA to see if elderly family member qualifies for VA home health care financial assistance